The Land Between
Cottage Country's Conservation Organization

The Top 10 Ladybug Facts You didn't Know You Needed to Know

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Ladybugs, or Lady Beetles as some people call them, are arguably one of the most beloved and easily recognizable insects in North America. Not only are they cute as beans, they also don't bite, fly around your face, or damage your plants. In fact, they are a major player in keeping gardens and agricultural crops healthy and pest free.

As spring approaches and they emerge from their hibernation nooks, you may notice a few of our spotted friends appearing in and around your home, garage, or

office building. To celebrate their awakening, here are 10 of the coolest facts you need to know about ladybugs:

1. **Ladybugs eat more than just aphids (but they eat a lot of aphids)**

Ladybugs and ladybug larvae eat more than 50 different species of aphids, and can eat more than 500 aphids a day! The beetles also consume other pest insects including mites, flies, and scale insects. As part of their complete diet, ladybugs also require pollen, their favorite of which comes from plants like dill, cilantro, and wild carrot, as well as dandelions and scented geraniums.

2. **Ladybugs have lots of defense mechanisms**

Some ladybugs have bright yellow, orange or red backs. In the animal world, these bright colours signal to potential predators that the ladybug is poisonous and bad tasting, and therefore should not be bothered. If this doesn't work and the ladybug is attacked, some species will release a substance from the joints of their legs that make them smell and taste really bad. Some ladybugs will even go so far as to play dead when threatened.

3. **They mature very quickly, but they can live for a relatively long time**

Ladybugs mature from their larval form to adults in about a week. Under ideal conditions, they can live for up to two to three years.

4. **They went to space!**

In 1999, four appropriately named ladybugs, John, Paul, Ringo, and George (after The Beatles of course) went to space! The four lucky bugs were brought to space, along with their favourite snack, aphids, so that scientists could observe how the predators and their prey would interact in zero gravity.

5. **There are more 6000 species of ladybug on Earth**

Of the more than 6000 species of ladybug found on Earth, 166 of them are found in Canada, and more than 70 are found in Ontario. However, most (about two thirds)

of the species we have here in Canada are not what most people would think of when they hear the term "ladybug", as they don't have bright colours or spots.

6. **One of the most common species of ladybug in Canada isn't actually native to Canada**

The Multi-coloured Asian Lady Beetle is one of the most common species of ladybug in Canada, but it is not native. It was introduced to North America by the United States in the 1970s as a natural control for crop pests, and made it to Ontario in 1992. Since then, as a result of its faster reproductive cycle and stronger cold tolerance than many of our native species, the Multi-coloured Asian Lady Beetle has taken over native ladybug populations to become one of the most common species in Canada.

7. **They are named after the Virgin Mary**

The name "ladybug" was first given to the insects by European farmers whose pest-ridden fields were visited by the voracious pest-eaters after they prayed to the Virgin Mary to save their crops. The farmers named the insect "Beetle of Our Lady" after the Christian symbol that answered their prayers

8. **A visit from a ladybug means different things around the world**

Ladybugs are widely seen as a sign of good fortune around the world. In England, ladybugs in your crop fields are a sign that it will be a good harvest. In Sweden, if a ladybug lands on the hand of a young woman, it is said to be measuring her for wedding gloves. And here in Canada, a ladybug spending the winter in your garage is a sign of good luck for the garage owner and their family.

9. **You can't tell how old a ladybug is based on the number of spots on its back**

Contrary to popular belief, you can't actually tell how old a ladybug is by the number of spots on its back. The number of spots on a ladybug vary according to the species and in some cases, according to the individual. What's more, ladybug spots actually fade as they age.

10. Ladybugs chew, but not in the way you might think

That's right, ladybugs chew their food! But unlike you and I who chew up and down, ladybugs chew by moving their jaws side to side.

Bonus Fact! - The wings of a ladybug beat 85 times per second when they fly! Crazy eh?

Who knew Ladybugs were so cool? If you would like to continue learning about these amazing beetles, click on some of the links below!
Sources:

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